

**Morning  
In The West**



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Norah de Pencier



To Nora Thompson  
with the friendship of  
many years from  
Katherine Dale.

Toronto October 1923.





**MORNING IN THE WEST**

**OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR**

**Grey Knitting**  
**The White Comrade**  
**The New Joan**  
**Canadian Cities of Romance**

# Morning in the West

A BOOK OF VERSE

*By*

KATHERINE HALE

(Mrs. John Garvin)

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TORONTO







**TO MY MOTHER**

**Katherine Hale Byard  
who means song to me**





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## MORNING IN THE WEST





## CUN-NE-WA-BUM

*Portrait in the Royal Ontario Museum*

Cun-ne-wa-bum—"one who looks on stars"—  
(Feel the singing wind from out the western hills)  
"The tip-end of a swan's wing is her fan,  
With a handle of porcupine quills."  
Here is the artist's name, Paul Kane;  
Painting in forty-seven, at Edmonton, I see.  
That was when prairies were untamed,  
And untamed this young Cree.

What an incantation in her name!  
Magic as her dark face underneath the stars;  
There is sword-like wind about it wrapped,  
And echoes of old wars.

Cun-ne-wa-bum!  
When turtle shells were rattling,  
And the drums beat for the dance  
In the great hall of the Factor's house till dawn,  
You sat without the door,  
Where the firelight on the floor  
Caught the red of beads upon your moccasins.

At evening through the grassy plains the wind  
Came shouting down the world to meet the  
dawn,

*Morning in the West*

And with the wind the firelight rose and fell,  
Answered with flame his shrill barbaric yell,  
And died like whining fiddles at his feet.  
And through it all the constant sound of drums—  
Did your feet move to drums?

The men from near and far,  
Crees and Sarcees,  
And a Blackfoot brave or two,  
Made rhythm of a dance that moves like rhyme  
To the rush of wind, and rattles swung in time  
To the constant, constant, constant beat of  
drums.

No Indian woman dances in the light;  
Silent they sit together out of sight.  
But to-night I think this artist from the East,  
Who had come to paint the natives hereabout,  
Found a splendid flare of crimson on the feast  
And moved near the open door,  
Where the firelight on the floor  
Caught the red of beads upon your moccasins.

So it is, O Cun-ne-wa-bum,  
Who were wont to look on stars,  
That you sit for ever here,  
Like a wild lost note from far,  
From the days of ancient war  
And of towered stockade and guns  
In the Edmonton of seventy years ago.



In your buckskin and your beads  
(Feel the sudden wind from out the western hills)  
The tip-end of a swan's wing for your fan  
With a handle of porcupine quills.

## BALLAD OF JASPER ROAD

I know a Blackfoot Chief  
Whose name is Dark Plume Bill.  
He lived beside the Jasper Road—  
And lives there still.

He wears a queer checked coat  
And a grey bowler hat,  
But looks his ninety-seven years  
For all of that.

His gaze is unconcerned  
As he sits in the sun,  
And counts the flashing motor-cars  
That pass, one-by-one,

And trucks, like dreary monsters  
Of a prehistoric day,  
That are rushing down the road  
In their crazy way.

“The first Red River cart,”  
Said Dark Plume Bill to me,  
“Came lurching up the prairie  
Like a ship at sea.”

(Oh, the long blue road,  
And the stealthy pad of feet  
And the first patient ox-cart  
With its sail-like sheet!)



“Then the carts came faster,  
And at the time of snow  
We camped outside the Palisade,  
Seventy years ago.

“Arrows, guns—big Buffalo hunts,  
Much long fight,  
And fires to warm the tepees  
For the feasts at night.

“But when they laid the steel  
And the long trail awoke  
My Indian tribe had scattered  
Like the wigwam smoke.”

His gaze was unconcerned,  
Yet he scanned the way he knew,  
As though from out its clamour  
He had found a vanished clew.

And I thought it must be strange  
To sit in the sun  
And look upon an ancient road  
That you had seen begun

Out of silence and mystery  
And crafty, ambushed death,  
Come alive with men, and monsters  
Of such an alien breath.

*Morning in the West*

(Oh, the long blue road  
And the stealthy pad of feet  
And the first patient ox-cart  
With its sail-like sheet!)



## BUFFALO MEAT

*A Daughter-in-law Writes*

It takes a letter sixty days to go—  
An Indian boy runs down the trail to-night.  
What shall I write to you?  
My mind is full of gossip of a town  
That you have never dreamed of.  
So—shall I tell you of our shacks,  
Huddled behind the tall stockade?  
Our guns, with muzzles set against the prairie?  
What if I write the truth!  
Your son is now a savage;  
By that much more I love him!

If I should say  
I can stand all this tropic, summer heat  
And menial tasks and crowded alleyways,  
And fat squaws lounging in the sun,  
And even water out of tainted wells,  
And long, rough prairie rides—  
All for the sake of autumn,  
And its short, magic days of pure content!

If you could know my mind!  
A little British mind two years ago;  
To-day a sort of crowded, pagan scroll,  
Recording strange old customs  
And legends, various as the Indian tribes,  
And prayers and songs and dances.

*Morning in the West*

Songs that are old as earth itself,  
Dances as elemental:  
Skin drums and tom-toms,  
Rattles of turtle shell, and whirl of winds  
Against the amphitheatre of hills.  
You will remember they were playing Sheridan  
When we left London!  
I can count every lilac spray on the old drawing  
room chintz.  
I hope—I hope you have not changed it since!

Let me begin again.  
If I should say  
I love this small, rough shack,  
For it has made me brave—  
Braver, at least, than when I saw it first,  
And saw a sea of prairie  
And the dim forms of buffalo herds  
Darkening the far horizon!  
I am braver now than when the halfbreeds came  
Racing towards us on that first wild day,  
Mad messengers to frighten us to death—  
Servants of trappers and the Nor'-west men—  
Those halfbreeds! feathers dangling, tomahawks!  
That was in summer.  
Still the buffalo lingered,  
Cropping the blue-grey grasses,  
Plunging in the muddy wallows,  
Always near us.  
I could almost touch a shaggy flank.



Two years ago to-day, in Piccadilly—  
That tea-shop place the day before we sailed—  
He said, "It may be wild enough out there,  
But I shall keep you safe—  
Oh, I shall keep you safe!"

We loitered through that first bright autumn  
And on the edge of winter had no meat.  
Who wants meat, here, must follow it—and kill.  
So, like a band of pilgrims, we set out—  
Unguarded women are not left behind—  
Walking beside our husbands all the way.  
Far out of sight, the Indians  
Search for the roaming herds.  
They are on splendid ponies.  
We settlers are the country's parasites.  
When Mary Scott, the factor's wife, and I,  
With two young squaws, were left a day in camp  
We learned an incantation.  
Another day when we were on the trail  
My wedding ring was taken from my hand  
Just as a warning,  
A little necessary bright horse-play,  
To show us who was master.  
Five days of march and then the broad plateau—  
White plains, brown beasts,  
Red, flying figures of the Indian guides,  
Bonfires at night and sleep in soft skin bags,  
Warm blood of slaughter—

*Morning in the West*

But—

It takes a letter sixty days to go,  
Even at this season, when there is no snow.  
Autumn has fallen on London.

I can see you in the sweet old room.

Please do not change a thing until I come!

Fires will be lit, your velvet curtains drawn,

And when you read my letter, dearest one,

Pray that some great day I may have a son

To mingle past with present.

For now each treacherous hour seems all of life;

I am as much a hunter as a wife,

To whom the summer is a breathing space,

Who waits for autumn

And trots beside her husband, through the grass

That shudders in the late November wind,

Or lies like frozen foam beneath our feet,

Looking for buffalo meat!

## RETURN OF THE TRAPPERS

Against the rolling snowdrifts,  
Misted by the frost-fog,  
Dwarfish, pigmy figures,  
See them come!  
Open the gates of the great stockade,  
Welcome them home.  
There's my Red-Scarf!  
I can almost hear him snarling,  
"Marche! Marche!"  
Down at old Fort Garry,  
I have heard them say  
That they take the women,  
Who dog-trot behind them  
All the way.  
Not out here! Not out here!  
With the glass at minus forty  
Half the year!  
There's the first big husky—  
Think you hear his bell?  
That is Henri leading;  
Yes, among a thousand halfbreeds,  
I would know his yell!  
What you bet the sleds hold?  
There's a slide!  
Why that drift the other day  
Stretched a half mile wide.  
What you bet the sleds hold?  
Fire the gun!  
Here the women come, pell mell.



*Morning in the West*

They've got ears, those Indian women,  
Not much need to fire the gun!  
Now we're in for days of steeping,  
Matching, drying, sorting—rum.  
Hear the whips crack!  
Hi! Hi!  
See, that's Henri!  
Three, four, five—  
Not one train lost.  
Here they come!

## AN OLD LADY

Madame de Courament excels at Bridge.  
Hers is a clever hand,  
Coloured with age and wrinkled;  
But beautiful and tapering too,  
Quite in accord with this old, stately room,  
With crystal chandeliers,  
And flowers and the warm tapestry of books.  
Silent the cards fall.

Down the long avenue a dog howls at the moon,  
A far, frost-sharpened sound.  
The wind swirls up a little storm of snow  
That blows against the casement.  
A skilled opponent, Madame makes few mistakes  
Like that a moment since,  
When suddenly the dog howled—and we lost a  
trick.

She has a flashing wit,  
Dinners at Rideau Hall are incomplete without her.  
As someone said the other day,  
“These elderly, elaborate folk  
Are like a passing pageantry,  
Gorgeous and of another day.”  
Silent the cards fall.  
Again the far-off dog howls at the moon.

An hour later, “Chateau Laurier” she told the  
chauffeur.  
And, alert and gay,  
Wrapped in her sables,

*Morning in the West*

She was motoring me the long white way to town  
And gossiping of little this and that.  
But just as we were nearing city lights  
She said, "I saw you noticed that dog's bark.  
It sounded almost like a wolf's;  
It took me back to the Red River days.  
Oh, it was fifty years ago, my dear;  
I was as young as you . . . It seems like  
yesterday.  
Hardships! I loved it all!  
Even the wolves, baying far out of sight,  
Failed to disturb our rest  
When we were safe at home.  
The Indians were quite friendly—  
And the eternal glamour of the snow!  
And yet to-night, just when I heard that sound,  
Sharpened by frost,  
I felt an old pain strike me,  
The knife-like thrust, before a child is born.  
I was alone that night.  
My husband had been called to Edmonton,  
My Indian maid had let her family in  
Looking for whiskey.  
I dared not call to her.  
For hours the Indians danced and sang and yelled.  
I watched them from my icy-cold bedroom  
Through great cracks in the floor.  
Before they slept they sat crouched by the fire,  
As I crouched up above in fright and pain.



And all night long I heard the wolves;  
They kept a sort of savage company  
With my own stifled cries.  
To-night, my mind went back a moment  
strangely—  
I always thought he had the sweetest face  
Of any of my seven . . . But then he was  
the first!"

She raised her glittering hand  
And found the speaking tube, to modify her  
chauffeur's pace.  
"And that, my dear, was fifty years ago," she said.  
"The prairie was a very different place—  
I never thought, then, I should come to Bridge!"

## SPANISH PILOTS

*To Agnes C. Laut*

These were the ragged peon crews,  
Half-bloods of Aztec women,  
Of Spaniards and adventurers  
Who were not seeking heaven!  
But out on the broad seas driven,  
And from the Horn to Sitka,  
They searched for deep-sea findings  
The whole unknown way,  
With "small ringing of bells  
And no trumpet blare,  
Empty stomachs, and empty guns,  
But plenty of prayer."  
And if they failed of the findings,  
Nothing behind but the branding irons,  
Or slavery in the mines.  
Yet they sang  
As they sailed in their rickety death-traps;  
They laughed as they rode,  
And they sank as the rip-tide caught them fast  
With a cry to the Virgin,  
A prayer to the Virgin—  
There was plenty of prayer at the last!

WOMEN





## ENCHANTMENT

I never see a bluejay  
But I think of her;  
Never hear that hoarse "dear—dear"  
From a tree-top stir,  
And the answering call  
Far, far away,  
And the flash of azure—  
Oh, she would stay  
Listening in the forest,  
Loitering through the silence,  
Hearing calls and singing  
All the livelong day!

## SHE WHO PADDLES

She who paddles swiftly,  
Lithe and brown in the sun,  
And dances, lithe as an Indian princess  
In the barbaric days of splendour  
Might have done—  
She can laugh and jest too,  
Play and wine and dine;  
But none of these things have wooed me,  
Bound me close by a mystery,  
Made her eternally mine.  
For we have found still places  
Deep in the wood;  
Climbed a ledge of grey rock  
Where a pink-legged heron stood;  
Heard the distant loon's cry;  
Watched a lonely bird fly—  
And she does not stir then,  
Does not turn to me then,  
But softly walks in the forest  
In no great need of men.



## DOWN NEAR THE GLEN

(In fear of fairies Irish women sometimes disguise  
their boys as girls)

"I dress him sweet," the woman told me,

"All in white with a frill of lace.

See his hair

An' the curls that's on it!

Do ye know a girl with a safter face?

"If so I keep him till five or over,

There's not a one will steal him then!

With a saft wee girl

They'd never bother,

The thievin' fairies down in the glen.

"Never take chances!" the woman warned me,

"For a boy is the thing that sticks to your heart!"

But I was mad!

I had decked mine bravely;

He was moulded a man from the very start.

## THE BOLSHEVIK

I met a woman of the Ward;  
She was in gay attire;  
Her blouse was blue, her toes were through,  
Her ear-rings flashed like fire.

A little boy with lustrous eyes  
Tugged at her coloured skirt;  
His skin was warm as the southern born,  
And he was caked in dirt.

Two women on the sunny street—  
We fell to friendly talk  
Of grocers' ways, and how it pays  
To purchase as you walk.

I asked her, as a neighbour might,  
If she had news to tell.  
She answered me, "Oh, quiet-lee,  
I think we soon raise hell!

"Too much we give to grocer-men;  
Too much the rich have place;  
More war to-day is the only way  
To put rich in hees place!

"We speak a leetle, you and I,  
Some papers scatter round,  
Soon rich will be, quite quiet-lee,  
All trampled on the ground.

“My man, he has a job all right,  
But he might have much more.  
Make leetle war, and there we are:  
No rich man at our door.”

The dusky boy with lustrous eyes  
Listened to his mamma,  
And then said he, quite quiet-lee,  
“Most dear, to-day I saw

“One motor car that I will own  
When I am grown a man!”  
His beauty spoke, in eyes, in throat,  
As just sheer beauty can.

And she forgot the little war,  
The beckoning blood and dirt;  
She smoothed his curls, so like a girl's,  
And smoothed his gay striped shirt.

“Grow up, be good, my little boy;  
One motor you may run!”  
Her eyes burned deep, war fell asleep  
As she looked on her son.

. . . . .

I met a woman of the Ward;  
She was in gay attire;  
Her blouse was blue, her toes were through,  
Her ear-rings flashed like fire.



PAVLOVA DANCING

Footsteps of youth through the springtime playing,  
Footfalls of snow in a blue mist straying,  
The rose of Russia in a bright wind swaying—  
A rose of fire and snow.

Voices chanting everywhere, but no word said,  
Fairy bells from ancient towers signalling the dead,  
Light love tuning viols while the dance runs red—  
A flaming dance of death.

White barbaric winters and a sky star-strung,  
All the hidden pathways, all the songs unsung,  
Caught in flying footsteps over wild music hung—  
She dances, and the Czar lies dead.

Oh, the cries, and martyrdoms, and fatal morns,  
Scarlet nights and fiery wine and bitter scorns,  
Dancing in a rose of joy from a field of thorns—  
Rapture from a land of thorns!

## CALVÉ IN BLUE

Here is blue fire  
That burns mere youth away  
And leaves sheer passion.  
Out of the coloured flame  
What pageantries arise,  
As that caressing tone,  
Through shimmering veils of harp and flute,  
Seems to peer ghost-like down  
Into a million hearts in nights long gone—  
Into a million eyes!

There is a black mantilla  
Of ancient Spanish lace  
Over the deep blue gown.  
The voice of Carmen sings again,  
The mocking voice of Carmen, scarlet still  
With love and certain doom.  
In it there swings a sword,  
And through it blows a laughing word—  
That strange, and quite inevitable word  
That time can never kill.

## SIGN TO TRESPASSERS

Was ever a woman  
Quite alone for a day?  
Other women will come  
Who should stay away.

Because my casement's open,  
As I wait here for you,  
Comes the faint Persephone  
Trailing through the dew.

She has lived a thousand years,  
Clasped her cosmic rose;  
Why she comes to trouble me  
Only heaven knows!

And there's another woman  
Keeps whispering in my ear,  
Till she has the whole house  
Pierced through with fear.

Some wandering nun it is,  
Whose lips can only pray,  
Has made my house a cloister  
In this dreary way.

And even now your taxi  
Must be racing through the town.  
(Will you love me, O my lover,  
In this pale yellow gown?)



*Sign to Trespassers*

I have written out a sign  
That I hope they will obey—  
“For all Peering Women  
There is no Right of Way.”

## SILVER SLIPPERS

I never wore slippers  
On sweet April evenings,  
But boots made for roads that we travelled in woe,  
For morning and evening  
Meant rough wayside places  
And feet that were slow.

But now silver slippers,  
Light-mannered, bright slippers,  
Great mirror-like floors and a green velvet lawn,  
Where we beckon with laughter,  
With music, with dancing,  
Sad youth—that is gone.

## A FABULOUS DAY

Oh, the days of the week they are constantly seven!  
And as certain to stay as the fixed stars in heaven.  
But my heart that denies them will wander away  
To find a more likeable, well furnished day  
That I know exists somewhere, invisible, real,  
And shining with moments the seven days steal.

The stocking I've wanted to darn since the spring,  
The folk-song, forgotten, that calls me to sing,  
The little old lady I hurry to see,  
The cumbersome caller, long promised to tea,  
Or the half-hidden passion pushed by through the  
week:

These surely may people the day that I seek.

Sometimes I shall play with a soul never born:  
A companion I met on the far side of morn.  
I shall nod at the losses I wept for last night,  
And find my to-morrows expectant and bright.  
But mostly I think the whole twenty-four hours  
Will be spent in designing a new bed of flowers;  
For everyone's heart, when it wanders away,  
Has its own things to do on a fabulous day.

## CHRISTMAS EVE

My house is arrayed  
In its garlands of Christmas delight;  
A red rose is this house  
In its holly and soft candle light.

But my heart is as cold  
As the heart of a colourless rose,  
And I feel the dead weight  
Of your holiday blanket of snows.



*To Marjorie Pickthall*

## TO MARJORIE PICKTHALL

The day you died, that April yesterday,  
I was alone in sunny meadow places,  
When, turning a dark clump of wintry leaves,  
I caught a glimpse of exquisite fresh faces,  
Renewing earth.

Then, thinking of another April day  
When you and I found bloom beneath the snow,  
I sent you happy thoughts across the world,  
Not dreaming it the day you were to go—  
But yesterday.

Yet, oh, not lost! how many a year shall turn,  
And youth and age, lonely for some bright way,  
Shall sudden feel you on the face of earth  
And push back death, and pluck you like the  
may—  
Immortal Song!

## I WHO CUT PATTERNS

I who cut patterns,  
As every soul must do,  
Fret myself with longing  
For themes that are new.

All these fashions  
Were moulded years gone by,  
And, like the mask of politics,  
Are coloured with a lie.

Even the treasured love motif,  
This thing of you and me,  
It must so carefully be cut  
To keep us bound, yet free.

And death, the sombre casket  
Of centuries of song,  
And war, and rivalries and creeds,  
These we have used too long.

To-day I found a charming thing  
Of silk and golden lace,  
And yet, beneath the filigree,  
What an old, wrinkled face!

Still, I believe in legends  
Of laughter and delight,  
And words all coloured with the sun  
And perfumed by the night.

*I Who Cut Patterns*

And I've a mind to leave the shops  
And fashions old and new,  
And cut my pattern from a wind,  
And baste it up with dew.

I who cut patterns,  
As every soul must do,  
Fret myself with longing  
For themes that are new.

## POETESSES

You who loved all lovely things  
And wrought in jewelled lines;  
You have gone your gracious ways  
That are patterned in dim stones  
Of perfumed, faint-hued words;  
You were a thing so feminine  
That even of war you sang in tender notes.  
But now another one has come,  
Who is herself at war.  
Her songs are keen and glittering,  
For she has felt the magic fire  
That you did long ago;  
But now the fire has burned clean through  
And forged a sword of steel.  
Swinging swords are women's songs  
That gleam as hard as diamonds do,  
And mean to cut tradition.

And yet those jewelled lines!  
Strangely the ancient magic works,  
Strangely the same fire lurks  
And burns imprisoned there  
In your dim, opaled words,  
That run like paths in heaven  
Paved in mosaic of sweet stones,  
And make a scented highway for our feet,  
Who wield these swinging swords.



GOING NORTH



## GOING NORTH

### I

#### *White Porches*

Just as we left the avenue  
I saw a golden butterfly  
Flutter against the windshield.  
I felt the motor take the breeze,  
As gaily as a yacht might do  
Upon some tidal river of the seas.  
We sailed a broad grey asphalt  
Out past the red brick houses,  
And fringy, ragged outskirts  
To where the fields begin.  
And Pickering, Whitby, Oshawa,  
Flashed by like friendly postscripts  
Of the Town's lengthy scroll,  
With dusty little detours,  
And cobblestone communities  
To break the highway's hundred miles  
Of river-like content.  
We smiled at sleepy Main Streets,  
And joyous village gardens,  
And sprawling crimson orchards,  
Heavy with ripened fruit.

Each mile or two a butterfly  
Danced near the blazing windshield,  
"The same gold butterfly!" we said,  
"And the same village street!"

*Morning in the West*

We passed a hundred porches,  
Ancient and modern porches,  
And some of them were white ones,  
And those we loved the best.  
Many a bed of phlox we passed,  
Lilac and pink and white,  
And they were gardens of delight  
Along our asphalt river-front—  
Sheer gardens of delight.  
We loved all purple calicoes  
On cheerful, ambling ladies,  
Their morning work already done,  
Sauntering through a mile of sun  
Up to the general store.  
Sometimes they sat on porches,  
Narrow but shining porches,  
Serenely shelling peas.  
“Just what is life,” we wondered,  
“For those who sit contented  
Throughout the magic summer  
On these pale country porches,  
Patching—knitting—talking—  
Serenely shelling peas?”



II

*Grey Willows*

Then we turned north.  
A railway train rushed by us;  
The blue-bloused engineer  
Hung from his stifling cab,  
Waving a careless hand.  
And in a moment we had lost  
All thought of shining porches  
And sleepy village streets.  
This was a thinner world  
Of smaller, leaner orchards;  
Taller, barer houses;  
Drier, keener air.  
Here and there grey willows,  
With an eerie whisper,  
Bent above a narrow stream  
That languidly slipped by.  
And over us the noon-day sky  
Turned brazen. Stark tree trunks  
Showed where bush fires had run,  
Charred columns of lost forests  
Dried by the sun into fantastic shapes.

This narrow stream,  
Unnursed by tree-held snow,  
Dwarfed by the fires, fifty years ago  
Would have raced by us foaming,

## *Morning in the West*

Even in summer, through a world of green—  
A lost green world of butterflies and fern,  
And soft anemones in spring;  
But now at every jagged, ugly turn  
Only a brush heap where the woods had been.  
The very soil is scorched—  
Scorched the brown ferns  
Descended from the ones that long ago  
Were licked into a burning wind of flame.  
Poor, narrow little stream,  
Bereft of that green dream  
That holds the snow! . . .  
There was a bit of rock a mile ago,  
The preface of the North!

### III

#### *Bush Road*

A soft swamp road,  
For forty miles through bracken and through fern,  
Smooth as a snake,  
With turn on twisted turn—  
Turns that meant few surprises;  
Yet, as it wrinkled on its way,  
The softly yielding earth that overlay its granite  
Seemed to say  
That once the lumber trails ran here,  
And once the voyageur  
Sang as he paddled down the foaming stream,

And once the woodmen came,  
Great gangs of woodmen  
With the axe and spike,  
Who set up rude encampments.  
Then, to hoarse shouts and orders,  
To laughter and to oaths,  
To roaring fires at night and whiskey-haunted  
songs,  
The soft green forest fell.  
It died robustly as it lived,  
And had its will of singing and of strife,  
An ardent, powerful, various sort of life;  
A more heroic fate  
Than this of late—  
A trail up to the playground of the North,  
A bracken-haunted, snaky road,  
A soft surprise to strangers, a delight.

IV

*Painted Rock*

Then the North took us,  
Forced us through rocky walls,  
Tore at our tires,  
Gave us no inch of earth  
Upon our steady climb.  
Yet even here, beside the cruel road,  
Were scraggy plots of farm,  
And wood-piles neatly stacked,  
And shacks, and gloomy faces.

*Morning in the West*

Then an acre of more fertile land,  
Pine trees and woods,  
And suddenly, like a blue cup held high,  
The lake Mazinawa . . .  
All silence, silence, silence—  
Dark colours filling the blue cup.  
And, like a purple stain against the sunset,  
The great rock of Mazinawa,  
Sacred to Indian tribes how long ago!  
A thousand years ago?  
Why should one care to know!

It looms up larger than I dreamed;  
Roadways of rock  
And canyons full of light;  
Niched balconies for pines bent all one way;  
Small birds in flight,  
Dashing against the dark  
Of that vast rocky flank,  
Whose sides of iron seams,  
Laid under golden lichen,  
Have been a place of dreams  
And of brute sacrifice.  
What if it has a power to draw us near  
As in the days of fear?  
When from the rocklands of the Georgian Bay  
Or through the bush roads whence we came to-day,  
But then on foot, soft-padding all the way,  
Or in the war canoes  
They crowded to this small blue lake of theirs  
And an old shrine . . .



What are we floating towards  
In this small, low canoe?  
A naked, ceremonial singing past  
Seems to reach out and whisper.

## STUDY IN SHADOWS

### *The Rock at Bon Echo*

#### I

Once in the twilight aisles of Amiens  
I thought I knew what shadows were,  
Creeping in golden dust and greying dust,  
And trooping down dim flights of measured air,  
Liquid in spacing, that those arches span.

#### II

But just last night, before the moon was up,  
Our little boat stole close against these crags  
That out-rear arches and reject the dark.  
Yet gradually the purple of the rock  
Melted before it; and again they came  
Creeping in golden dust, and greying dust,  
And crowding down those giant flights of stair  
That open slowly as eternity,  
To hold the feet of shadows, lost in night.

#### III

Then I remembered Götterdämmerung—  
How before doom falls on the gorgeous host,  
Slowly there drifts across the empty stage  
A smoke-cloud, lonely as a passing soul.

In very truth the gods return to you—  
Great rock that blazes colour in the sun—  
And, as in the Valhalla of old song,  
Parade before our eyes the whole day long  
And make a glorious end,  
As with you they are folded in a sleep.  
No cloud foretells their doom, but wings of birds  
A moment sweep your side—then fall away.

## NORTHERN GRAVEYARDS

Stony fields and lonely roads,  
Meagre hamlets, very lean,  
And most prosperous graveyards  
Lying all between.

Each few miles a graveyard,  
With its crouching column  
And its urns and headstones,  
Very dark and solemn.

But with what an accent!  
Yellow, purple, red,  
Lie the votive offerings  
To this public dead.

Close beside the railway,  
Where the smoke drifts high,  
These are decked in garlands  
For the passerby.

Even in the winter,  
Breaking through the snow  
Immortelles beguile us,  
When the train runs slow.

They are strangely cheerful,  
All these plots of ground  
That have lost the loneliness  
Of the living. Here abound



In a comradeship increasing  
Those who in their hour  
Reaped a dreary harvest,  
Missed a magic flower.

Over them the smoke-wreaths,  
Snow, and whispering grass,  
And the voice of neighbours,  
Sighing as they pass;

While the urns of iron  
And the barbarous vases  
Chant a willing ritual  
To forgotten faces.

So they sleep together,  
And their shades may say:  
"Wave to us, O restless traveller!  
We are glad to stay."

## STONY LAKE

By southern seas I have seen purple stones  
Throw back the shadows of the waves and hills.  
On the Ægean, so the stories run,  
Greek youths, with many a saffron-coloured sail,  
Rode flame-like to the rhythm of the gale.

Again, on the bright shores of this small lake,  
Purple of hills and pink of northern rocks.  
To-day I met a sail-boat in the wind  
And at its mast a brown Canadian boy—  
He was as splendid as his mate of Troy.

## TRADE

It might have been two hundred years ago,  
For all the difference in her way or mine,  
That her canoe, with paddle dipping slow,  
Just as the sunset ran to embers low,  
Stopped at my rocky door.

With fish and basketwork she plied her trade,  
And I, to help a little money last,  
Answered her barter with a coat I made  
Of coloured wool—oh, many seasons past!  
We were both satisfied!

## SNAKE ISLAND

"Ages ago," my Indian says  
(As we are fishing in a cove  
Of this green island, with its trees and shacks),  
"Here was wild grass and many snakes.  
After a while they disappear,  
For soon the white man comes, and makes  
Houses like these to live in!"

So the old name is suddenly made new.  
Snake Island! . . .

Ages ago, perhaps, the trees were elfin  
And tall grass towered to the skies,  
Until, to all those narrow, screen-like eyes,  
This was a dazzling fen,  
Perplexed with tangled fern,  
Peopled with glittering prey;  
Dense borderland to where the black pools lay  
Whose captives twist and turn.

Burrowing, boa-like, harlequin snakes,  
Your day was brilliant and flashing enough!  
Snakes casting skins in continuous slough,  
Grass snakes and ring snakes, on dragon-flies bent.  
Was there a charmer, with musical pipe,  
Lured you a moment? Some Indian charm  
Surely touched you with sorcery, gave you alarm,  
Ere the people who meant to build houses like these  
Came and killed you—  
And killed the wild grass.

## JUNIPER RING

Juniper ring on the granite rock,  
Deep and green and perfectly planned;  
Living with you I understand  
Circle-magic of old.

You had a sister in mystery—  
Was it only an April ago  
That a crocus cup on a bed of snow  
Promised eternal things?

It will be longer, Juniper,  
Till earth declares you ready to break,  
And you fade of the havoc her brown hands make  
That are covered with mystic rings.



WHITE SLUMBER

Who has come to that farthest island  
Beyond White Gull Bay?  
There is a little tent among the birches  
Since yesterday.  
Those birches are the palest things  
Even in the morning sun!  
Among them the tent has suddenly blossomed,  
As the white flower of a night-blooming cereus,  
Silently, deep in some forest of sleep,  
Might have done.  
Who are they? What dreams must be theirs,  
Who have found such a magical camp unawares?

## CRIMSON POOL

Even you, dark pool—  
Even you feel death.  
On your soft brown surface  
There are deep reflections  
Of a fiery breath.  
To the waiting forest  
Death does not come creeping  
As it comes to men;  
It comes shouting, waving banners,  
Burning out its way with torches,  
Hanging garlands now and then.  
All the green walls of your silence  
Hung with crimson,  
Even you, dark pool—  
Even you feel death.  
On your soft brown surface  
There are deep reflections  
Of a fiery breath.



## MIRACLES





## MIRACLES

We said: "The Universe shall kneel!"  
And so the dreams of long ago  
Have bound the winds and stars,  
And lashed the waves to giant bars,  
Till Light itself is chained.  
We fly on wings of steel;  
We beckon Mars.  
Almost the frightened worlds, I feel,  
Must in their journeys swerve and wheel  
Far from the Will of Earth.

Suppose the Universe should speak!  
And on some thundering street  
Quite suddenly, before our eyes  
A fountain, cool and sweet,  
A careless, laughing little thing  
Should dance upon the air  
And all the very wise of us  
Be held in wonder there! . . .  
Suppose one day an angel,  
Through some caprice or whim,  
Should walk along a city way  
That we might talk to him;  
And all the men and women,  
And all the horses too,  
Should bow and fall before him,  
As mortals used to do! . . .

*Morning in the West*

I wish that some quaint miracle  
Might happen, even to-day,  
Whereby the Universe should speak  
And men kneel down to pray.











